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KARL MARX:

His Life and Teaching

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BY

ZELDA KAHAN-COATES.

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Karl Marx: His Life and Teaching.

By ZELDA KAHAN-COATES.

KARL MARX was born on May 5th, 1818, at Treves. His father was a prominent Jewish lawyer and notary public at the County Court. He was a man of great talent, highly educated, and thoroughly imbued with the liberal progressive ideas of 18th century France. In 1824 a Prussian edict was issued commanding all Jews to be baptised on pain of forfeiting all official position. Although a free-thinker, a disciple of Voltaire, the old Marx submitted, rather than give up his profession and thus bring ruin to his family. Karl Marx's mother was a Dutch Jewess of Hungarian descent, whose ancestors were Rabbis.

Karl soon showed great promise intellectually, and, fortunately, his parents were able to give him every encouragement and opportunity for cultural development.

His father read Racine and Voltaire to him, and early made him familiar with the French classics, whilst at the home of Ludwig von Westphalen, his future wife's father, he learnt to love Homer and Shakespeare. Karl Marx's deep sympathy with the working class and his revolutionary ardour were based on pure reasoning, insight and study; it was not in any way due, in the first instance, to mere sentiment, to class position, or personal suffering. Nevertheless, he was anything but the mere cold philosopher, the impersonal scientist, the detached dissector of history. As all his personal friends and his whole life testify, he was not, like Darwin, his contemporary, a mere specialist, but besides being a genius, he was an all-round human being with all the loves, desires, passions and weaknesses of the human being. It is interesting to note that his first literary efforts were poetry. His daughter Eleanor relates that " he was always loved and feared by his schoolmates

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—loved because he was always ready for boyish pranks, and feared because he wrote cutting, satirical poetry and exposed his enemies to derision." All his life he remained passionately fond of poetry, art, and music. His favourite authors were Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Balzac, Schedrin and Pushkin. He was the personal friend of all the German revolutionary poets of the time, Heine, Freiligrath and Weehrt, and not only inspired many of their revolutionary poems, but often helped Heine whilst they were together in Paris to polish off lines, every word in a poem sometimes being discussed between them until all was smooth and polished. Marx knew about half a dozen languages, could write literary French and English like a native, and was, moreover, deeply interested in the progress of science. Liebknecht relates how excited he became when the first electric engine was exhibited in July, 1850. Engels also emphasises the joy Marx always felt when a new discovery was made in any sphere of theoretical science, although, he adds, this was not equal to what he felt when such a discovery could at once be applied to industry and thus contribute to the development of society. When Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859, and even before that, Marx at once recognised the epoch-making importance of Darwin's work, and for months in the circle of the German fugitives nothing was spoken of but Darwin.

We mention all this in order to show his universality and to refute the fairly prevalent idea that Marx was a mere " dry-as-dust " economist. We shall speak later of his work, but we may here mention that whilst even Marx could not make the science of economics exactly easy, nevertheless even the more formal aspects of the subject are not treated in his work as drearily as by the older economists, whilst the historical sections of even " Capital " are so full of human sympathy and understanding, the illustrations are so apt, the sarcasm so natural and to the point, that no worker imbued with ordinary intelligence and a general elementary education need be afraid of tackling his works providing he has a certain power of concentration and determination to learn.

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EARLY POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.

At 16 Marx entered the University of Bonn, and in 1836 he went to the Berlin University, in order, at the desire of his father, to study law, but he does not seem to have paid much attention to his studies. Philosophy interested him far more, and although his parents' hopes were disappointed, the world undoubtedly gained by the fact that the young Marx became an ardent student of philosophy, and joined the circle of the Berlin young Hegelians. There he made the acquaintance of much older men, such as Bruno Bauer and F. Köppens, who soon recognised the genius of the young student, although they were later to differ from him very materially. Already, at that time, his thirst for knowledge was inexhaustible and his capacity for work, self-criticism and attention to every detail which could clarify a philosophical or historical problem, was remarkable. In 1841 Marx obtained his doctorate, and thought of establishing himself at the University as lecturer of philosophy; but the experience of his friend Bauer, who was a private lecturer there, and had had no end of trouble with the authorities, soon convinced Marx that such a position would be untenable. The same year, however, the Rhenish liberal bourgeoisie founded a new opposition paper, the *Rheinishe Zeitung*, and although Marx was then only 24 years of age, he was made editor of the paper. His editorship was one continual fight with the censorship, "But," as Engels said, "the censorship could not get away with the *Rheinishe Zeitung*." Marx's great ability to win and dominate men already showed itself here. The censors allowed many a passage to go through that gave offence to the Berlin authorities. They were reprimanded and continually changed, but nothing availed, and finally the Government adopted the best and surest means of getting rid of the nuisance. They suppressed the *Rheinishe Zeitung* altogether. At the same time the embarrassment he found himself in when it was necessary to engage in controversy on so-called material interests, controversies on forest thefts, free trade, protection, etc., gave Marx the first impulse to study economic questions.

HIS MARRIAGE.

About this time Marx married the playmate and friend of his childhood and youth, Jenny von Westphalen. Herself a highly-intelligent and well-educated woman, Marx could not have had a better helpmate for life. From the day of her marriage to the day of her death, she shared all the joys and sorrows, all the hopes and aspirations of her husband. They were devoted to one another. Their daughter, Eleanor, relates how, when her mother, in the autumn of 1880, was so ill that she could scarcely even rise from her couch, her father also had an attack of pleurisy which kept him in bed in a separate room. "Mohr" (that was the name by which Marx was known to the family circle and friends because of his black, shaggy hair and beard), she says, "recovered from his sickness this time. Never shall I forget the morning when he felt strong enough to go into dear mother's room. They were young once more together—she a loving girl, and he an adoring youth who, together entered on their life—not an old man wrecked by sickness and a dying old woman who were taking leave of each other for life." Mehring states that one of the most sworn enemies of this worst of atheists and communists nevertheless characterised this marriage as having been consummated in heaven.

HIS MEETING WITH ENGELS.

After the suppression of the *Rheinische Zeitung* Marx and his wife went to Paris. There he worked for a short time on the *Französische Jahrbücher Deutsche*, and later on the Paris *Vorwaerts*. Whilst working on the former Karl Marx became acquainted with Frederick Engels, and henceforth these two became the closest possible personal, political and literary friends. By this time Marx had already reached the first beginnings of the fundamentals of his conception of materialism, of which we shall speak later. He had reached it mainly from the philosophic side. On the other hand, Engels, who had lived for a long time in England, the cradle of modern industry, had come to similar conclusions from a study of the practical conditions of industrial life in England. The two thus complemented each other, and together they were able to

achieve what would have been, if not impossible, at any rate far more difficult for one alone to accomplish. From this time onward they were in almost daily intercourse, either personally or by letter, and how voluminous, interesting and intimate their literary relations were can be seen from the four volumes of their letters to one another, which were published a few years ago in Germany by Bebel and Bernstein. For the most part, Marx devoted himself to the study and investigation of the more theoretical side of their work, whilst Engels chiefly devoted his energies to the practical application of their theoretical deductions, and particularly, later on, to the propaganda of their ideas and to polemics with their opponents. But we have it on the authority of Engels himself that scarcely a word that either wrote or a policy that they promulgated but was discussed between them first.

THEIR MATERIALIST DIALECTICS.

Their first scientific work was a complete break with the contemporary school of German philosophy. We have already mentioned that Marx, when still studying in Berlin, had joined the school of Young Hegelians. Marx had made himself thoroughly master of the Hegelian philosophy, without, however, becoming a slavish imitator or disciple. He extracted from it all that was revolutionary and useful for the study and interpretation of history. The Hegelian philosophy proposes, as a law of progress, the continuous transformation and upsetting of existing conditions and the continuous growth of new oppositions and the overcoming of existing ones. It puts it down as a law that the germ of the new exists in the old, that as this germ develops, so at first the difference between the two is merely quantitative, but when the quantitative difference has reached a certain stage, there is a break between the two and the difference becomes qualitative. This law is true throughout organic and inorganic nature, and it is perhaps well worth one's while to stop to illustrate it by a few examples. In chemistry, we know of a number of series of carbon compounds, only differing one from the other by the number of carbon and hydrogen atoms they contain. Thus if we take marsh gas we may represent it by CH_4. If we add to this under whatever conditions,

either carbons (C) or hydrogen (H), we shall only get a mixture of marsh gas and carbon or hydrogen. This will continue until we add a quantity corresponding to one atom of carbon and two of hydrogen, when the whole nature of the substance changes and we get a *new* gas, with new properties, acetylene, or C_2, H_5, and so forth. Quantity has changed into quality. Now let us take a simple example from physics. When water is heated it becomes warmer and warmer, but up to a certain point the difference is merely in the degree of heat: fundamentally the cold water and the hot water are still the same liquid, but when the heat applied reaches a certain quantity, 100°C or 212°F the water suddenly turns into a new substance—steam, a gas with quite different properties from water. Quantity has changed into quality. Now let us take one example from history. So long as the labourer was tied to the soil, so long did we have the form of society known as serfdom. But as production and commerce developed, so it gradually became more and more necessary to have free access to labour in certain areas which could only be obtained by allowing the labourer, or potential labourer to travel where work was to be found. Also, as the old processes and forms of agriculture either became obsolete or not so profitable to the landowners, the latter started to give their serfs either more freedom of movement or to convert their forced labour for them into money payments or rents. Thus gradually there developed all the conditions in society for the abolition of the system of serfdom, and when this development reached a certain stage, serfdom gave way to free private production. In some cases the change was brought about with much, in other cases with less, violence. In some cases the change was rapid; in others it was slow. But in all cases the change was a revolutionary one—a new form of society took the place of the old, because the new conditions necessitated this change.

We have no space to multiply these examples, as might be done from all the sciences and from all experiences in life. These laws and these methods of study Marx and Engels adopted from the Hegelian philosophy. But whilst they held fast to Hegel's dialectical *method* they rejected

his dogmatic idealistic superstructure. The Hegelian philosophy, like all other idealistic schools of philosophy took it for granted that ideas are not images of real conditions, but that they exist independently, and that their development forms a foundation for the development of things. This Marx and Engels repudiated. They substituted as the foundation materialism, the world of real things, nature and history for ideology or the independent idea developing apart from things. They gave expression to this new dialectical materialsim, as well as a refutation of the use to which the small bourgeois Hegelians had put Hegel's philosophy, in a book entitled *The Holy Family*, published in 1845. Later they wrote another book together on the same subject, which, although not published, served to clear their own ideas and to give them a thorough grasp of their materialist conceptions.

In the meantime, Marx had been studying political economy in Paris, and also carrying on a vigorous polemic against the Prussian Government. The latter took its revenge by securing his expulsion from Paris. Marx then went to Brussels, where he wrote occasionally for the *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung*.

At the Free Trade Congress in 1846 he delivered a speech on Free Trade which was later published in pamphlet form, and in 1847 he wrote " Poverty of Philosophy " in French as a reply to Proudhon's book, *The Philosophy of Poverty*. In this work Marx, using the Hegelian dialectic in the materialist revolutionary form adopted by himself and Engels, lays bare the laws of society and develops the fundamentals of modern scientific socialism.

THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE.

In Brussels Marx and Engels entered the " League of the Just," which, assuming different forms in different countries, finally developed into the Communist League, an open legal propaganda association. In November, 1847, they were commissioned to draw up its complete, practical and theoretical party programme. This they did in the " Communist Manifesto." A historical product of its time, this manifesto still forms the ground work of the modern international social democracy. The " Communist Manifesto " exhibits in classic form the results of the theoretical and practical work of Marx and Engels. Whilst with its keen analysis of bourgeois society it could not possibly have appeared at any earlier epoch than it did, nevertheless, unlike the numerous other systems and programmes of a future society drawn up at about the same time, which have passed into oblivion sooner or later, the " Communist Manifesto " still remains, indeed is becoming more and more a beacon of light to the workers of the world. And the fact that the programme drawn up by Marx and Engels has endured and is still true seventy years after its publication, is due to the extraordinary insight and understanding of its authors, who could trace with a sure hand the inevitable results of a system then only in its infancy.

So important is this short work for our movement, so well does it exhibit the spirit of the Marxian teaching, that it will be well worth our while to stop to analyse it.

THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO.

The " Communist Manifesto " is based on historic materialism. Its fundamental idea is that the political and intellectual development of any historical epoch is based on, and can only be explained from, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange of that epoch, and the social structure resulting therefrom. The whole history of mankind, since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership (this prehistoric period of human society has been worked out by Morgan, Engels, and others, and fully supports the materialist conception of history) has been a history of class struggles, struggles between exploiter and exploited, the governing and the governed, at different stages of development in society. The history of these struggles forms a series of evolutions in which a stage has now been reached, when the oppressed and exploited class—the working class—can only attain its emancipation from the exploiting and ruling class—the capitalist class—by emancipating the whole of society once for all from all exploitation, class distinctions and class struggles.

The first section of the Manifesto deals with the bourgeoisie (capitalists) and proletarians (workers) and shows in

brief how the modern capitalist class developed from the earlier systems of society, and how the increase in the means of exchange and of commodities, the opening up of new markets and the discovery of new lands gave " an impulse never before known to commerce, to navigation, and to industry, and thereby also gave a more rapid development to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society of the time." Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie, which played a very revolutionary rôle, was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class. " The bourgeoisie, wherever it has obtained the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations . . . in one word, for exploitation veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, unashamed, direct brutal exploitation. The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage servants." All venerated opinions are swept away and all new ones become antiquated before they can ossify, and the consequence of all this is that man is at last compelled to face realities and to get a clearer insight into things.

The capitalist mode of production, once brought into being, " compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt its own mode of production ; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, *i.e.*, to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image." The capitalist system has concentrated vast masses of the population into huge towns. It has centralised the means of production and has concentrated property in few hands, and from this necessarily followed political concentration and the formation of the modern nations from the former loosely connected provinces. It has made the country subject to the town. In the same way, it rendered barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on more civilised ones, nations of peasants on nations of capitalists, the East on the West. (Since then, of course, the East has been awakening, and is necessarily itself rapidly becoming bourgeois, showing in its development, in spite of all the peculiarities of the

climate and races inhabiting the Eastern hemisphere, similar features to the older bourgeois West.)

" During its rule of scarcely 100 years, the bourgeoisie has created more massive, more colossal productive force than all the preceding generations put together. . . ." But, as the fetters of feudalism had to be burst asunder to make room for the growth of capitalist production, so bourgeois society is becoming incompatible with the rapidly developing mode of production, and all the social, political and intellectual relations in society resulting therefrom. The very weapons with which capitalism beat feudalism are now turned against itself. The great expansion in production, which resulted in its triumph, will now also be the cause of its death. As an example of this, the Manifesto points to the ever more frequent occurrence of commercial crises in which there breaks out an " epidemic of over-production."

The bourgeoisie, however, has not only forged the weapon to be directed against itself, it has also produced the men who are to wield this weapon—the modern working class—the proletarians. The Manifesto then traces the rise of the proletariat, its relation to the capitalist, and how it is recruited from all classes of the population. From its birth, the working class is engaged in a conscious or unconscious struggle with the capitalist class. But the bourgeoisie itself is also constantly engaged in struggles—at first with the aristocracy, later, with those portions of the bourgeoisie whose interests are antagonistic to the further progress of industry, and at all times with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries. In all these battles the capitalist class is compelled in its own interests to call in the aid of the working class, and although the latter, without knowing it, is really fighting the battles of its worst enemy, it nevertheless in the process, learns the value of co-operative effort ; it is dragged into the political arena, and is thus supplied by the capitalists themselves with the weapon with which it will slay them. Although the lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the handworker, and the peasant are all at war with the bourgeoisie, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. It is the peculiar and essential product of

modern industry, and is destined to bring about those new social relations and political conditions which will bring the latter into harmony with modern industrial development. As for the social scum, or, as it is known in German, the "lumpen proletariat," it may now and again be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution, but its whole condition of life is such as to make it the ever-ready, bribed tool of reaction. The Manifesto then proceeds: "All previous historical movements were movements of minorities or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is (or must become) the self-conscious independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up without the whole super-incumbent strata of official society being blown into the air. . . ." The development of modern industry, therefore" (in the above and other ways) "cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie consequently produces, above all, are its own grave diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."

In the second section the Manifesto first points out the relation of the communists (now read socialists) to the proletariat. The former have no interests apart from the latter; they are only the advance guard of the working class movement in all countries. Further, the ideas expressed by the communists have not been invented or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer. "They merely express in general terms, actual relations arising from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes. The abolition of existing property relations is not at all a distinctive feature of communism. All property relations in the past have continually been subject to historical change, consequent upon the change in historical conditions." Communism does not propose the abolition of property in general, but of bourgeois private property, and a variety of still familiar objections to socialism are then dealt with. Says the Manifesto:—"You are horrified at our intention of doing away with private property. But in your existing

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society private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence for these nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for the existence of which is the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society. In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so: that is just what we do intend. . . . Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society: all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labours of others by means of such appropriation."

As for the philosophical arguments against the communists, the Manifesto says:—"What else does the history of ideas prove than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class. When people speak of ideas that revolutionise society, they only express the fact that within the old society the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence."

But then it has been, and is still repeatedly urged, that there are certain eternal truths such as freedom, justice, etc., that survived all changes. This is quite true—but why? The history of all past society has consisted in the development of class antagonisms, these antagonisms assuming different forms at different epochs, but the exploitation of one part of society by the other has been common to all past ages. Small wonder then that, however the social consciousness and ideas have varied, a common basic thread runs through them all, which can only disappear with the final disappearance of all class antagonisms. "The communist (socialist) revolution being the most radical rupture with traditional property relations, its development necessarily involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas."

Section III. is a masterly exposition of the various schools of mere reformist, reactionary and utopian socialists.

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The last section points out that whilst the communists fight for the attainment of immediate aims and the enforcement of the momentary interests of the workers, they nevertheless, do not lose sight of their real aim—the complete emancipation of the working class and the Manifesto ends with the historic words: "The communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!"

This was written seventy years ago, and except in minor details, every word rings even more true to-day when industry and commerce have made far more gigantic strides than they had up to 1848. The development of the working class conversely has kept apace. Its extension and its increasingly conscious political organisation into a definite class party, carrying on even if only a semi-conscious struggle against the capitalist class and the capitalist system have been Marxian in essence, even though many of its leaders may have repudiated Marx with their lips. On the other hand, the comparative slowness of its progress and the mistakes it has made have undoubtedly been largely due to its ignorance of the theory of its own development in particular, and of that of society in general. To that also may be attributed the mental aberration which has led sections of the socialist parties of the world to throw in their lot in the present war with the deadly foe of the workers, the capitalist classes of the world. But Marx himself never maintained that the historical laws of society discovered by him worked smoothly and evenly to their logical conclusions. On the contrary. There are bound to be many ups and downs, and it must necessarily take a long time before the slave class of any community can completely throw off the ideology, the ethics, the modes of thought and opinions of the ruling classes which have been inculcated in it for generations. But the law works surely, if slowly, and the day must come sooner or later when the workers will at last free society from the millstone of capitalism hanging

round its neck, and with it will vanish all the misery and degradation, all the carnage, the slaughter of the innocents, which takes place daily in slum and factory, and periodically on the bloody fields of battle. Then we shall be relieved of the shame of prostituting science to the gods of Mammon and War, and shall at last allow the beauties and wonders of Nature, the wonderful achievements of science, literature and art to be the common and inelienable heritage of every human being.

THE INSURRECTIONS OF 1848.

On February 22nd, 1848, a few weeks after the publication of the "Communist Manifesto," revolution again broke out in Paris, and amongst other places disturbances occurred in Brussels and, although previously the Belgium Government had refused to expel Marx at the bidding of the Prussian Government, it did so now. He went to Paris, took part in the movement there for a short time, and then went back to Germany, where the revolution was calling him. He went to Cologne and there started the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. Engels, who took a very active part in the paper, says: "It was the only paper in the democratic movement of the time defending the standpoint of the proletariat." Whilst advocating energetic and decisive action against the old order and its representatives, it nevertheless showed clearly that the destruction of the reactionary Government was but the beginning, not the end of the revolutionary struggle—that it would but pave the way for the real class struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. It frankly supported the Paris July insurgents of 1848, although "it thus estranged nearly all its stockholders."

After repeated attempts, the Prussian Government at last felt itself strong enough to suppress the paper (May 19th, 1848), nearly a year after its appearance, and Marx was once more exiled. He went to Paris with a mandate from the Democratic revolutionary Central Committee, an insurrection being planned by the Democratic Party both for France and Germany. But this insurrection, which was chiefly the work of the radical middle-class, and took place June 13th, 1849, failed. Marx had to leave

France, and he went to London with his family, where he remained for the rest of his life.

MARX'S WORK IN LONDON.

Here, after the dissolution of the Communist League, which took place in 1852, Marx at first devoted himself to journalism and to his scientific studies. In London, leading the life of a poor political refugee, constantly worried by grave bread-and-butter problems for his family, Marx nevertheless managed to get through a tremendous amount of work. To earn a living he wrote a long series of articles for the *New York Tribune* on political conditions in Germany and on economic subjects. A brilliant study which will ever remain valuable for the student of Continental history of the time, this work was subsequently reprinted in book form under the title of *Revolution and Counter-Revolution.* At about this time Marx also wrote *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* a brilliant exposition of the Coup d'Etat of December 2nd, 1851. He also wrote a remarkable series of articles on the relations of Lord Palmerston to the Russian Government. "Urquhart's writings on Russia," says Marx, "had interested but not convinced me. In order to arrive at a definite opinion, I made a minute analysis of Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, and of the Diplomatic Blue Books from 1807 to 1850." Two pamphlets—one entitled *Herr Vogt,* exposing the hypocrisy of France and Prussia in their war of liberation on behalf of Italy against Austria and the other *The History and Life of Lord Palmerston,* are written in Marx's best, characteristic, satirical style, and in their small volume are veritable treasure stores of contemporary history.

MARX'S ECONOMIC THEORIES.

In 1859 the *Critique of Political Economy* was published, giving for the first time an exposition of Marx's theory of value. In the introduction, he lays down the general theory which, once reached, served as the leading thread in his studies—namely, the dependence of the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life on the mode of production in material life, and this indeed runs throughout this and his other economic

writings. Originally it was intended as the first instalment of a complete work on Political Economy; later this plan was abandoned and the substance of the *Critique* was summarised in the first volume of *Capital* (published eight years afterwards), the two other volumes being edited by Engels after the death of Marx.

Obviously it is impossible, in the present small pamphlet, to enter into a discussion of Marx's economic theories. We can only confine ourselves to a bare outline of the fundamental ideas underlying Marx's treatment of his subject. The whole question is dealt with by Marx from an historical, concrete point of view. Indeed, his economics is only a particular application of his general philosophic, historical theory to the economic structure of the capitalist system. When he treats of labour, of value, of capital, of property, he does not discuss these things merely in the abstract, as entities in themselves, for they have, and can have, no meaning for us when divorced from social relations. Unlike the bourgeois economists before him, he did not accept the prevailing economic system as the final and only natural system. He regarded it as one stage in the development of society, and he set out to define the relation between labour and capital and the inevitable results of the progress in the modes of production.

Under the capitalist system, unlike the systems which preceded it, a man's wealth does not consist in the number of articles of comfort or use to himself which he may possess. The distinctive feature of capitalist production, which gives it its peculiar character is that things are produced not for the satisfaction of the needs of the producer or even of the employer, but for the sole purpose of exchange. The things produced are wares and merchandise or, in the economic term, commodities. And since the wealth of capitalist society "presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities, our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of the commodity."

THE THEORY OF VALUE.

Marx therefore goes into an exhaustive analysis of a commodity, and finds that, apart from having a use value, that is, being ultimately useful for the consumption or

use of the one who desires it, its distinctive feature, under capitalism, is its exchange value. A thing is a commodity only so long as it has exchange value, and it is no longer a commodity when its use value asserts itself, *i.e.*, when appropriated for use in whatever form or degree by the consumer. The use value of a thing is inherent in the thing itself in relation to the person using it, whereas the exchange value is a definite economic relation, it is essentially a social product, and depends for all its peculiar attributes on the prevalent mode of production. "One cannot tell, by the taste of wheat, whether it has been produced by a Russian serf or French peasant or English capitalist." Its use value remains the same, however produced. But its exchange value in a given society will depend on the forms of production prevalent in that society.

Capitalist wealth is an aggregation of exchange values, and in order to understand capitalism, the nature of exchange value and the distribution of commodities must be explained. Take any factory product which is the characteristic form of production under capitalism. It was produced in a factory by a large number of working men, hired by an employer or manufacturer. It was then sent to the wholesale dealer, whence it went to the retailer, who sold it to the consumer. There may have been more or less middlemen between the production and the use of the things by the consumer, but all who took part in its production and distribution did so, not because of any need or love of the thing itself, but in order to make a profit for themselves. Whence did this profit for each of them come? We assume, of course, that all concerned are quite honest, and that each paid the fair market price for the article. Each received his share from the purchase price paid by the consumer or from the exchange value of the article. The exchange value of the article first manifests itself in the price paid for it by the wholesaler to the manufacturer. Value ,it must be remembered, is the cause of price, but is not identical with it, and they do not even always coincide in amount. Things may be bought cheap or dear, that is below or above their value, for whilst value is determined by the social conditions of producton, price is determined by individual motives, the given

estimate of its value by or to the individual, the haggling of the market, supply and demand, and so forth. The average of the prices paid for an article is its market price which will always be governed by the social value of the substance sold.

What is this social value common to all commodities? It is human labour. A thing has exchange value only in so far as human labour, physical or mental, is embodied in it. And it is not merely labour under any conditions. What determines the value of an article is the socially *necessary* labour contained in it, that is, the amount of average human labour necessary for its production under the given conditions of society. If anyone uses more or less labour, that does not alter the exchange value of the article which is measured only by the *socially necessary labour*. Further, if more articles are produced than under the existing social condition can be distributed for use, the exchange value of such articles will fall. If the tools of production are improved, then during the first period of transition, when the old methods are still the generally accepted methods of production, the value of an article is measured according to the human labour socially necessary with the old system of production, whereas when the new system becomes the more prevalent, the value is measured according to this new system.

All this applies to all commodities, including the peculiar commodity, labour power, which, whilst belonging to the individual, and inseparable from him, is in the capitalist mode of production, unlike that in all former modes of production, bought and sold like any other commodity. Like all other commodities when bought by the capitalist, the price paid for the worker's labour-power is in accordance with the necessary social labour contained in its reproduction, that is, he will have to pay the labourer in wages the amount which, under the given conditions of life, the labourer needs for his maintenance and for the propagation of his species. This will, of course, vary with the standard of life, with the supply and demand of labour, with the degree of association of the labourers for their common interests, and so forth. But so long as only one portion of society is engaged in production, whilst the

other section lives on the products of that labour, the wages paid for the maintenance of the labourer will be less than the value of the goods he produces. This is the essence of the capitalist system of production. The amount of labour spent by the labourer in producing the value of his wages is " necessary " labour, and the product produced is " necessary " product, and the value of the product " necessary " value, whereas the labour put in above that necessary to reproduce the value of his wages is " surplus " labour, the product so produced " surplus " product, and its value " surplus " value, " necessary " being used here in the sense of necessary to make a living under the given conditions possible.

There are one or two other points to note. By increasing his capital, and by improving his plant and machinery, the capitalist increases his profit (although, be it noted, not his rate of profit, but we cannot go into this subject now). It might thus, at first sight, appear as though the machinery created at any rate some of his surplus value. But a machine, when produced for sale to the capitalist, is as much a commodity as any other article, and the value contained in it is equal to the necessary social labour required for its production. The same is true for the rest of the plant, the raw material, and accessories employed in the production of any particular article, let us say cloth. And spread over a number of years, this value of the raw materials, machinery, etc., finds its way into the finished product—cloth. The cotton and accessories in the finished cloth, as cotton, etc., have not changed their value ; the machine and other plant, as such, has not changed its value except in so far as it has given up a little of it, which is written off as " wear and tear."

Why, then, if profits are the result of the surplus value produced by surplus labour, do profits increase the more machinery is perfected ? Simply because a machine is a time-saving apparatus. It enables the worker to reproduce the value equivalent to his wages in a shorter number of hours every day, thus leaving a longer number of hours to be employed in the production of surplus value. If previously the worker had to work six out of every twelve

hours to reproduce his wages, an improved machine enables him to do it in, say, three hours, and to present the capitalist with nine hours unpaid toil. That is why, with every advance in the mode of industry, the rate of exploitation increases and the class antagonism between the workers and capitalists becomes sharper. A similar result, that is, an increase in the rate of exploitation, is obtained by increasing the working day (this being limited however, to the point when it might impair the efficiency of the worker). Being a more open, direct effort at exploitation, it leads to resistance ; hence the fights on the working day between the capitalist and working classes.

Again, the same result is achieved by lowering the standard of living of the workers or by reducing the cost of living ; hence, on the one hand, the employment of women and children whose standard of living is generally lower than that of men (and who, so far, have also been more docile, helpless tools than men), and, on the other hand, the introduction of Free Trade (when England had as yet nothing to fear from the competition of other countries), thus reducing the cost of food to the workers. It is no mere accident that the same industrial capitalists who were so largely instrumental in bringing about Free Trade for the main purpose, as they themselves made clear, of lowering the cost of food, these same philanthropists bitterly opposed every attempt to shorten the working day, or to limit the employment of women and children under even the most inhuman conditions.

And it is from this surplus labour of men, women and children, producing surplus value, and for which the capitalist has paid nothing, that the wealth of the capitalist has been, and is being, built up. At one time, the owner of slaves or serfs simply appropriated the products of his chattels, and saw to their feeding, clothing, etc., as he would to that of his cattle. Now, however, men are outwardly free, and mystery surrounds the wealth of the non-producing class. This mystery is simply the appropriation by the capitalist of the surplus labour or the surplus value produced by the worker. This is the peculiar form of expropriation of one class by the other taken under capitalism, and upon this, the necessary relation between

the capitalist as a class and the worker as a class, which is the very essence of the capitalist form of production, is built the whole superstructure of capitalist jurisprudence, capitalist laws of property, capitalist ethics, in a word, the whole of capitalist ideology. And whatever real reforms may be brought in, the exploitation of the workers will continue, and the morals of capitalists will be the generally accepted morals of society, so long as the capitalist form of production endures. Only with the " expropriation of the expropriators " and the substitution of production for use instead of for profit will the workers, the vast majority of the nation be rescued from exploitation and really become free men in body and in mind.

THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY.

We cannot go more fully into this subject here, but before leaving Marx's theoretical system we desire to say a few words on the Materialist Conception of History. For of all the theories ever promulgated, this has been the most popularly misunderstood, and it is of the very essence of the Marxian teaching.

Of course it goes without saying that we do not mean by this conception that the individual of any given epoch is actuated by his own material gain to act as he does. On the contrary, the materialist is the first to recognise the enthusiasm, ideals and aspirations of individuals. The philosophic materialists, those who accept Marx's materialist conception of history most completely are the very individuals who are most ready to sacrifice, and have sacrificed, their own material advantages for the sake of their ideals, witness as only one example the numberless Marxian socialists in Russia who have given up and are daily prepared to give up their all, including their life, for the cause dearest to their hearts, the social revolution. What distinguishes the materialist is not that he is a man without ideals, and denies the possession of these to other men, but that he probes deeper into the reality of things and inquires whence come these ideals and enthusiasm—why these particular ideals and morals and thoughts at this particular epoch.

Why, for instance, do we now shudder with horror at the idea of cannibalism, of slavery, even of serfdom, whereas we accept without demur the hidden form of slavery existing at the present time ? Simply because when the productive forces of society were small and primitive, the prisoner of war or the stranger caught trespassing could serve no more useful purpose than that of a meal for his conqueror— to keep him would only have meant a burden for society, and for a very poor society, even an intolerable burden. The cannibal did not thus reason with himself, but unconsciously to himself, his ideas, his moral feelings, his whole psychology accepted the eating of his fellow-men as a natural, quite moral thing to do, because, without knowing it, it was the most natural thing to do under the conditions of the society in which he lived. Similarly with the custom of killing off female or weakly babies prevalent in some primitive societies who otherwise are extremely kind and tender to their children. As, however, the productive forces develop, and the means of substance therefore increase, additional men are a blessing, and not a burden. A new ideal, the sacredness of human life, a horror at eating one's fellow-being, appears first faintly, then more strongly, until it finally takes the place of the old. But what underlies this ideal, what has made its appearance possible, what has caused this, often enough unconscious, change in moral outlook ? Simply the development of the productive forces, or in a later stage of society, the change in the mode of production. We do not now kill off our weakly babies, but we let them grow up, without proper care to make them strong in mind and body ; we allow them to breathe the foul atmosphere of factory and workshop at a tender age, when they should still be at school or in the country. We crush them in body, mind and spirit with monotonous toil. Kind, honest, tender people that we are, we rob the vast majority of mankind of all that makes life worth living—our morality, our religion allows all this. Why ? Because our mode of production necessitates a plentiful supply of cheap labour, whatever may happen to the individual labourer. We make and obey laws regarding private property and theft ; we obey a certain code of morals, and regard these laws and

morals as immutable, and yet we allow the product of the labour of the majority to be appropriated by a minority, and regard it as a legal, honest, righteous action. Why? Because, as Marx has shown, the morals and laws of the governing class are, unconsciously to ourselves, imposed on the whole of society, and growing up, as we do, in their atmosphere, we regard as natural what is in reality but the outcome of a given form of economic industrial conditions.

But many of us are revolting against this; we proclaim that we do not necessarily regard as moral and as right principles which are thus regarded simply because they have been hallowed by custom or because they coincide with the convenience of the governing class. We are ready to sacrifice everything to bring about a new social order, in which the horrors of the present day shall be buried for ever. How is it that we are imbued with these ideas, ideals, and enthusiasms, and what is it that has given them the form which they have actually taken, of demanding the establishment of socialism? Because capitalism is fast outliving its time, because, as Marx has so well shown, and as we have indicated above, the giant advances made in the mode of industry are fast, becoming no longer compatible with the existence of society under capitalism. Moreover, the whole mode of life which has resulted from the capitalist form of society, the aggregation of vast masses of the people in town, the association of large numbers of workers in factories, the more and more centralised and collectivist forms of production resulting from the advances in industry, the sight of the unheard of wealth and luxuries of the possessing classes in comparison with the untold misery and poverty of the propertyless classes—all that and more that we have no room to mention here, has resulted in giving us new ideals, new hopes, new enthusiasms. The germs of the new are already sprouting in the old, and the new ideals are gradually taking the place of the old. If we say that the breakdown of capitalism and the establishment of socialism is inevitable, we do not mean that if we sit still with folded arms, eyes shut and mouths open, the plums of socialism will fall into our mouths. No, we mean that it is inevitable that we do *not* sit with folded arms and do nothing. It is inevitable

that a larger and larger proportion of the population of every capitalist country should be driven into revolt, should get to understand the real nature of the system under which we live. It is inevitable that the collectivism which is manifesting itself more and more daily in the domain of production should lead to the association of the workers engaged in this production first for comparatively small economic gains, then more and more for political aims, for the purpose of mastering production instead of being mastered by it. In short, it is inevitable that the capitalist psychology of the workers should change into socialist psychology as the economic conditions become ripe for socialism. But the more we understand the need and necessity of this change, the more enthusiastically we work for ideals which we know to be in accordance with the historic development of society, the quicker will this change be brought about.

The materialist is, therefore, anything but a fatalist He is simply logical and practical. Instead of being moved by mere sympathy to devise pretty schemes (as, for instance did the Utopion socialists) which may or may not be possible of realisation, he works in a direction which he *knows* must bear fruitful results. Further, in choosing his methods, he again studies economic and historic conditions. Here he finds that what gives our capitalist society its characteristic form is the appropriation by the capitalist, without any equivalent return, of the surplus values created by the workers. There is thus a fundamental antagonism between the capitalists as a class and the workers as a class. It is the working class which is most vitally interested in freeing itself from the enslavement of capital. It is, therefore, to the worker that the scientific socialist chiefly appeals. Moreover, studying the conditions of present-day life, we see that the workers in their mass are those to whom socialism will appeal most strongly. Compare the psychological effect their respective conditions of life are bound to have on the factory worker, the small peasant working on his own bit of land, and the small shopkeeping class or private tradesman. The peasant leads an isolated life; he has little means of intercourse with his fellow-beings; his ideas are

likely to be narrow ; he knows little of the great world, and cares less. He is mastered by the forces of nature, depends on them and lives in awe of them, thus being a ready subject for the belief in the supernatural. He gets his living by his own exertions on his own bit of land ; the idea of association with his fellowmen can scarcely enter his mind. The idea of collectivism, of common ownership, at once conjures up to him the idea of losing his all, his plot of land on which his whole life depends. He would quite naturally not readily risk so much for what must seem to him a mere chimera. He is evidently not very suitable material for socialist propaganda. (Of course the case is different with the hired peasants on large farms, where the land is being worked on capitalist lines.)

Now take the small shopkeeper. While his mind may be somewhat broadened by the fact that he lives a more social life than the peasant, nevertheless he is not ready material for the socialists. The small property he possesses gives him a certain sense of a stake in the existing order of things. He is living in daily dread of being hurled into the working class, but, on the other hand, he is also living in hopes of increasing his property and thus lifting himself up to a higher social order. It is true he hates the large capitalist, but there is more envy than distrust in his feeling towards the latter. He may even rise up against him, but it will be for reactionary purposes, to stay further progress, and he will not go too far, lest the horny-handed sons of toil also lay their grimy hands on *his* property. That is why, as a class, the small bourgeoisie has always proved a treacherous ally of the working class. That, of course, does not mean that individuals of this, or a higher class may not join in the struggle for the emancipation of the workers, and may not by their greater opportunities and knowledge render great service to the movement, providing always that they quite de-class themselves intellectually, *i.e.*, providing they adopt in its entirety the ideals of the class conscious workers.

Lastly, let us take the factory worker. He has no private property ; his attachment to it, is therefore, comparatively slight. Of course he believes in it and stands in awe of it, and wants some, and so on, but his attachment

to it is not personal. The idea of a society without private property cannot appal him to the same extent that it does the others. He has none to lose himself, and he will therefore be more disposed to accept the possibility of a form of society where no one shall possess any. He is in daily intercourse with his fellow-workers ; his ideas have broadened. He is associated with his fellow-workers in the production of things ; the idea of producing things collectively seems a natural thing to him ; the idea of owning these things collectively is but a step. His employers associate for their common good—why should not the workers associate for *their* common good—and they do so. In the factory and in town, he is constantly brought face to face with the wonderful human achievements, and sees how men have mastered the forces of nature. The supernatural, therefore, loses some of its terrors for him, and he learns to rely on his own efforts. Thus, apart from all the other influences at work, the extension of education, and so on, the aims and ideals of socialism fall on fruitful ground when propagated amongst the workers. That is why the scientific socialist says it is inevitable that the masses of the industrial workers must sooner or later embrace socialism, and by carrying on his propaganda amongst them, he is doing all he can to bring about this change as rapidly as possible.

If, in this brief sketch of the materialist conception of history, we have succeeded in clearing away some of the common misconceptions and have stimulated to further study and thought on the subject, our time will not have been wasted.

THE INTERNATIONAL WORKINGMEN'S ASSOCIATION.

In addition to his theoretic studies, Karl Marx also took part in the practical work of the international labour movement.

When, in 1864, at a meeting at St. James Hall, the international Working Men's Association was definitely founded, Marx was its intellectual leader. It was a society for the organisation of the working classes of all countries, and it did an immense amount of work in that direction. Whilst not exactly responsibelfor the uprising of the Paris Commune,

it nevertheless declared itself entirely at one with the Paris Communards, and upon its Parisian members fell the chief burden of directing the Commune while it lasted. As to the war of 1870-1871 immediately preceding the Commune, Marx fully approved of the attitude of the German Social Democracy, and addressed a letter to the Brunswick Conference of the party, accurately forecasting the inevitable results of a policy of annexation.

The Commune of 1871, on which there is an interesting work by Marx entitled *The Civil War in France*, fell, and with it the " International," long an object of fear and hatred to the governing classes, was banned in all countries. With this its field of practical action was largely cut off. Moreover, the organisation of the working classes particularly in Germany, had reached a stage when the members perforce had to devote their chief energies to the perfection and development of their national organisations. Finally, largely owing to the fact that this first International had outlived its time, internal dissensions of more or less serious nature broke out from time to time. In the meantine Marx, as general secretary, became very overcrowded with work, and desired to devote more time to the completion of his main work, *Capital*. He retired from the secretaryship, and on his suggestion, the headquarters of the International was removed to NewYork in 1873. With this the International as an organisation for the time being came to an end. Marx, however, continued to take an active interest in the work of the party in every country, and he and Engels were generally recognised as the unofficial representatives of the International in Europe, to whom socialists of all countries constantly came for advice and guidance.

MARX'S PRIVATE LIFE AND CHARACTER.

And now we cannot, perhaps, better conclude this hasty sketch of the life and work of Karl Marx than by giving a few quotations from his daughter Eleanor's writings, and from the memoirs of Liebknecht, throwing some sidelights on Marx's private characteristics and illustrating the dire conditions under which Marx lived and worked.

Quoting from her mother's notes, Eleanor Marx says : " Soon after the arrival of the family (in London) a second son was born. He died when about 2 years old. Then a fifth child, a little girl, was born. When about a year old she too fell sick and died. ' Three days,' writes my mother ' the poor child wrestled with death. She suffered so . . . Her little dead body lay in the small back room ; we all of us (*i.e.*, my parents, Helen Demuth, the faithful household assistant, who dedicated her life to Marx and his family, and the three elder children) ' went into the front room, and when night came we made us beds on the floor, the three living children lying by us. And we wept for the little angel resting near us, cold and dead. The death of the dear child came in the time of our bitterest poverty. Our German friends could not help us ; Engels, after vainly trying to get literary work in London, had been obliged to go, under very disadvantageous conditions, into his father's firm as a clerk, in Manchester ; Ernest Jones, who often came to see us at this time and had promised help, could do nothing. . . . In the anguish of my heart I went to a French refugee who lived near and who had sometimes visited us. I told him our sore need. At once, with the friendliest kindness, he gave me £2. With that we paid for the little coffin in which the poor child now sleeps peacefully. I had no cradle for her when she was born, and even the last small resting place was long denied her. . . .' ' It was a terrible time,' Liebknecht writes to me, ' but it was grand, nevertheless.' In that ' front room ' (they only had two rooms) in Dean Street, the children playing about him, Marx worked. I have heard tell how the children would pile up chairs behind him to represent a coach, to which he was harnessed as horse, and would ' whip him up ' even as he sat at his desk writing."

Liebknecht, who for a long time was in daily intercourse with him, also lays stress on the unusual affection Marx had for children. " He was not only the most loving of fathers, who could be a child among children for hours, he also was attracted towards strange children, particularly helpless children in misery that chanced his way . . . physical weakness and helplessness always excited his

pity and sympathy. A man beating his wife . . . he could have ordered to be beaten to death. By his impulsive character on such occasions he not unfrequently brought himself and us into a 'fix' . . . . It is necessary to have seen Marx with his children in order to understand fully the deep mind and the childlike heart of this hero of science. In his spare minutes or on his walks he carried them around, played with them the wildest, merriest games—in short, was a child among children . . . When his own children were grown up his grandchildren took their place. . . . Jean or Johnny Longuet, his first daughter, Jenny's, eldest son, was grandpa's pet. He could do whatever he pleased with him, and Johnny knew it." Once Johnny " conceived the ingenious thought of transforming 'Mohr' into an omnibus, on the driver's seat of which, *i.e.*, Marx's shoulders, he seated himself, while Engels and myself were to be the omnibus horses. Having been hitched up, there was a wild chase. . . . And Marx had to trot until the sweat poured down his forehead, and when Engels or I tried to slacken our pace down came the whip of the cruel driver, 'You naughty horse. *En avant,*' and so forth, until Marx could stand it no longer: then, by negotiation with Johnny, a halt was called."

Liebknecht further throws some interesting sidelights on Marx's character. For instance, his ability at times to to play mad, boyish pranks; his love of chess—how he was capable of playing till late at night and the whole of the next day, and when he lost a game he would at the same time lose his temper, and even be most disagreeable at home. On this account Mrs. Marx and Lenchen (Helen Demuth) begged Liebknecht not to play chess with " Mohr " in the evening.

Marx was a wonderfully clear and efficient teacher. He was stern in that he demanded the thoroughness which he himself practised; at the same time, he was kind, patient, ever ready to help. As for popularity, he cared nothing for it. He knew that the vast masses could not for the time being understand him, and a favourite saying of his was: " Follow your course and let others talk."

Marx's eldest boy, Edgar, a very gifted child, but weakly from his birth, died in London when about 8 years

old. " I shall never forget the scene," says Liebknecht. The sobbing Lenchen, the weeping mother convulsively clasping her two girls, and Marx in terrible excitement almost angrily refusing all consolation. At the funeral Marx sat in the carriage, " dumb, holding his head in his hands. I stroked his forehead: 'Mohr, you still have your wife, your girls and us—and we love you so well.' 'You cannot give me back my boy!' he groaned. . . . At the graveside Marx was so excited that I stepped to his side, fearing he might jump after the coffin."

Thirty years later, when his wife died, Engels likewise at the funeral had to grasp his arm quickly or he would have jumped into her grave. Marx's wife died of cancer, December 2nd, 1881, after a brave fight with death. In spite of terrible suffering she maintained interest in general affairs to the last, and tried to dispel the fears of her family by joking and bright spirits. Their daughter Eleanor says: " When our dear general (Engels) came, he said—what I then almost resented—'Mohr is dead too,' and it was really so." Owing to overwork, his habit of often working almost all night, he had so undermined his originally strong constitution that he had already been ill for some time, and was obliged from time to time to give up work and travel for his health. His wife's death, however, undid all the good his travels had done him. He tried to keep up his strength and heart for the sake of the movement, but when, at the beginning of January, 1883, Jenny, his eldest daughter, also died, he never recovered from the blow. He died quietly in his study arm-chair on March 14th, 1883. Thus passed away, as Engels said, the " greatest mind of the second half of the 19th Century," and for his epitaph we have every right to use the words chosen by Eleanor Marx:

" . . . The elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world: 'This was a man.'"

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